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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [KISL](#) [PTER](#) [KPAL](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: MGLE01: NATIONAL DIALOGUE DISCUSSIONS REVEAL
PRO/ANTI-STATE DIVISIONS

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador. Reason: Section 1.4 (b).

¶1. (C) On June 8, the Lebanese national dialogue reconvened. Two important events hung over the discussions of this round: 1) the Blue Line incidents of May 28 in which Hizballah positions were destroyed by Israeli air strikes, and 2) the June 1 riot that followed the television spoofing of Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah. The first order of business for the dialogue meeting had been a response to the national defense strategy as presented by Hizballah's Hassan Nasrallah at the previous dialogue session. Post had already received a copy of a written response to Nasrallah worked out by the March 14 movement, as well as a verbal take on Michel Aoun's strategy for the meeting. The discussions inside the dialogue revealed a clear division between those who sought a strong, sovereign Lebanon, and those allied to Hizballah's vision of a state within the state.

THE MARCH 14 RESPONSE TO NASRALLAH
RESPECT THE STATE

¶2. (C) Walid Jumblatt and Samir Ja'ja' took the lead for the March 14 coalition in responding to Nasrallah's Hizballah defense strategy. Jumblatt and Ja'ja' had collaborated on a paper that outlined their basic principles. When Ja'ja' took the floor, he spoke more of the technical aspects of the defense strategy, outlining how the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) might be better equipped to protect Lebanon from Israeli aggression. Ja'ja' also proposed an increase in the number of UN troops along the Blue Line.

¶3. (C) Hizballah presented technical objections to Ja'ja's proposals without accepting his chief argument that defense was the responsibility of state institutions. Instead, Nasrallah attempted to pick apart the details of the March 14 presentation. During this exchange, Michel Aoun, former commander of the LAF, and the only professional military person in the room, remained silent. When challenged by March 14 to make some comment, he said, "I am not here as a soldier but as an advocate."

AOUN AIMING AT THE GOVERNMENT
AND MISSING ALL ELSE

¶4. (C) Michel Aoun participated in the national dialogue session, but during the defense discussion, he refused to speak to technical issues. Instead, he proposed that the dialogue resolve the political problems that give rise to a need for resistance. He said Lebanon must decide on how to proceed with its relationship with Israel. The former

general said that if Lebanon were still at war with Israel, the response to Nasrallah would be different than it would be if they all accepted a truce with Israeli.

15. (C) Aoun spoke on the issue of the Palestinians as well.

According to Aoun advisor Gebran Basile, Aoun criticized the government for not disarming Palestinians outside of the refugee camps, as previously agreed. Aoun said that the national dialogue had empowered the GOL to disarm the Palestinians and to discuss the border with Syria. Neither of those projects has been started. In response, Aoun proposed that the national dialogue create an ad hoc committee to travel to Damascus to open discussions with Syria on national sovereignty issues. The committee would comprise members of the March 14 Coalition, the Hizballah-Amal alliance, and Aoun's own Free Patriotic Movement. Aoun's people told us that this idea met with broad resistance. March 14 Minister Marwan Hamade described, in a conversation with the Ambassador, Aoun's proposed delegation as, "...like sending chained slaves to Damascus."

16. (C) The resettlement of Palestinians in Lebanon was also a matter of concern for Aoun. He proposed that the GOL request a UNSC resolution declaring that no Palestinian refugees would be settled on Lebanese soil. Aoun saw this as the natural follow-up to other resolutions with speak to the future of Palestinians in the region. His aide Basile said, "the right of return is protected, but what about those who did not want to return?" The dialogue also rejected this idea. Aoun, at the end of the session, was bitter at the flat rejection of what he still considers good ideas.

THE MARCH 14 GROUP:
THE STATE ABOVE THE RESISTANCE

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17. (SBU) The Jumblatt-Ja'ja' paper was a statement of principles framed around the idea that the resistance could and should be replaced by the Lebanese state. Rather than challenge Nasrallah on the value of the resistance, or the technical details of defense strategy, the March 14 coalition laid out, for the first time, a philosophy for the future development of the country. The document declares: 1) Israel is the enemy; 2) the resistance was of value to the country and the people of the south suffered disproportionately under Israeli occupation; and 3) given the present political realities, the state should have exclusive control over the defense of the nation.

18. (SBU) Jumblatt followed up with a reported political declaration that the state and its institutions must be built up as the decisive authority for the entire country. The building up of the state was quickly endorsed by other March 14 dialogue participants: Ghassan Tueni, Boutros Harb, Amine Gemayel, and Saad Hariri. This response was perhaps the most significant aspect of the dialogue session: March 14 put forth a clear vision of a single authoritative state, with an uncontested dividing line that separates the March 14 group from those, led by Hizballah, who either favor or at a minimum condone the concept of a state within a state.

FELTMAN